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SUMMER 1954

NUMBER 4

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TEN YEARS OF SERVICE

With the current issue, the *Review* has completed ten years of service to teachers of Modern Languages. From the publication of its first number in the fall of 1944, the *Review* has been a co-operative enterprise. Subscribers, contributors, advertisers—all have helped to make the *Review* a success. We thank you one and all for your enthusiastic and faithful collaboration! Now that *The Canadian Modern Language Review* has become an indispensable part of our language programme, let us press forward to even greater heights of service!

A special acknowledgement is due to the Index Committee, a sub-committee of the Editorial Board. Under the capable leadership of Mr. Sniderman, this hard-working committee has produced a comprehensive Index to the first ten volumes of the *Review*. Hereafter each volume will be provided with an Index. Have you completed your files? Back numbers of the *Review* may be purchased from the Business Manager at 50c. a copy.

(O.M.L.T.A.) RESOLUTIONS FOR 1954

The following resolutions were passed at the 1954 Easter Convention of the O.M.L.T.A.:

1. Moved that the O.M.L.T.A. set up a standing text book committee to keep in touch with publishers in order to assess and recommend improvements in new texts while these are still in manuscript form.
2. Moved that a dictation test similar to that administered at present in French be included in the Upper School Examinations in German and Spanish.
3. Moved that the secretary write to the Department stating that the choice of topics for free composition is approved of by the Section and that we wish to have this practice continued. It was suggested also that the range of choice be extended.
4. Moved that the Department of Education be urged to provide for the teachers of other Modern Languages scholarship facilities similar to those already available to teachers of French, with the purpose of enabling them to study in the country of the language concerned.

(Concluded on Page 11)

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SUMMER

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CONTENTS

<i>Concerning the Influence of Voltaire in French Canada</i>	
	Antoine J. Jobin 6
<i>Common Errors in Written French</i>	R. W. Torrens 12
<i>Supplementary Reading</i>	M. Sniderman 14
<i>Le Notaire du Havre</i>	C. D. Rouillard 15

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5

CONCERNING THE INFLUENCE OF VOLTAIRE IN FRENCH CANADA

A Commentary and Refutation

By Antoine J. Jobin, University of Michigan

In 1945 M. Marcel Trudel published a doctoral thesis he had successfully defended at the Université Laval. It is difficult for the student of French Canadian cultural life to under-estimate the significance of this painstaking and tenacious effort to reveal Voltaire as a preponderant influence upon the intellectual élite of French Canada from the time of the Conquest to the end of the nineteenth century. *L'Influence de Voltaire au Canada* may be termed an important work by students of French Canadian culture, not because of the validity of its sweeping generalization and categorical conclusions, but primarily on account of the revelations it conveys concerning the mental attitudes and emotional states of an articulate minority endowed with intellectual curiosity and profound respect for the human mind. To the average student of French Canadian formal literature, conversant only with the main currents from the Quebec and Montreal schools to the contemporary florescence of the novel, the great body of this literature has furnished but very little evidence of independent thinking or even of interest in ideas, particularly those which are controversial. Historian Garneau and Arthur Buies, journalist, are notable exceptions among the eminent nineteenth century writers whose works may properly be termed "literature". In the contemporary movement Gabrielle Roy manifests an interest in human values in conflict with the social order, and Roger Lemelin has revealed a talent for social satire. Jean-Charles Harvey has had practically no vocal support in his rebellion against conformity in patterns of thought and action, and has vigorously inveighed against the traditional system of education.

Now, thanks to M. Trudel's laudable effort—an immense amount of conscientious research—the hitherto insufficiently informed observer is apprized of the ambivalence of French Canadian intellectual activity throughout the nineteenth century, two distinct movements inspired by totally different mental and emotional attitudes: (1) a main current of strictly literary works, eminent, but not outstanding, but which laid the foundation for the more mature and polished productions of the present era; (2) a sub-movement or current of independent thought expounded chiefly by journalists and members of discussion groups such as the famous "Institut Canadien de Montréal (1844-1878).

Thanks again to M. Trudel, the non-specialist may no longer be amazed at the lamentable paucity of ideas in French literature, nor at the total absence of the "esprit frondeur" which has been a signal French trait through the ages. It is profoundly interesting to note that even a limited group of intellectuals, living in a milieu far from conductive to reflection because of concentration on the exploitation of material resources, should have retained a predilection for the discussion of ideas, some of universal interest, such as freedom of inquiry and communication between free men.

It is debatable whether M. Trudel could substantiate his broad generalization "that voltairianism seems to have been the sole organized and persistent literary movement in the period 1860-1900". In the first place, the so-called voltairian movement could by no stretch of the imagination be termed "literary". In the second place, it need hardly be repeated that practically none of the Quebec or Montreal schools' most prominent authors were "beguiled" by French eighteenth or nineteenth century liberal thought. Although Fréchette is included in the group of Voltairians for having published a sardonic and revealing exposé of the corruption, cruelty and inadequacy of a long line of French kings, the works which established his reputation are definitely not voltairian in essence or spirit. His "*Petite Histoire des Rois de France*" is simply an answer to royalists at home and abroad. Moreover, Voltaire never opposed, as did Rousseau, the monarchical form of government. He merely sought to reform it.

As regards the little group of independents whom M. Trudel labels as voltairians who exercised a pernicious influence upon the French Canadian mind, how many persons to whom Crémazie, Lemay, de Gaspé, Lozeau and Nelligan are familiar names, are acquainted with the activities and mental attitudes of those whom M. Trudel discusses in this thesis? True, few will fail to recognize the name of the great Papineau, but as a statesman and eloquent orator, moving spirit of the ill-fated Rebellion of 1837-38. His indignation against the High Clergy was prompted by its attitude toward the rebels, not by an overseas influence, needless to say. His associates were also voltairians, according to M. Trudel's estimate, not because of their books, but because of their revolt against constituted authority. To pursue the question further, how many Canadian readers are familiar with mid-nineteenth century journalists, such as L. A. Dessaulles, the brothers Doutre, Eric Dorion or an enthusiastic exponent of French culture like J. G. Barthe, who even crossed the sea to gain French support for the "*Institut Canadien*". All of the foregoing bear the brunt of M. Trudel's attack upon the "*Institut*". As for really influential personalities outside the Montreal coterie, who would concede that Etienne Parent, editor of *Le Canadien*, whose epigraph was "Nos Institutions, Notre Langue et Nos Lois", was deeply interested in anything but the central problem of French survival in North America? Parent dealt in ideas. It may have been that some coincided with those that were in the air at the time, and which had been discussed by many thinkers in France, as well as in the United States of America. It is not improbable that intellectuals of his type included Voltaire in their reading, along with many others whom Voltaire himself had included in his reading, for he was far from original. It is a fact that intellectually curious men have a way of extending the horizon of their knowledge, but, as a rule, they can think for themselves, and many in Canada actually did so, as is evident from their discussions of purely domestic problems.

However, if M. Trudel fails to convince the critical reader that Voltaire was the fountainhead of every humanitarian and liberal idea

in the French Canada of the period 1760-1900, he does contrive to draw several parallels between his voltarians and the sage of Ferney, especially on questions of universal interest treated by many other thinkers before and after Voltaire. In addition to indicating such an affinity with independent thinkers, this scholar does effectively explode the hackneyed theory that, from the Conquest to the visit of the "Capricieuse" in 1855, French Canada was cut off from all French influences. As in the United States, a limited group of readers possessed libraries, which included, of course, works of the eighteenth and nineteenth century social philosophers.

If we concede the point that numerous parallels may be drawn between some members of the élite and Voltaire, it is pertinent to observe closely whether this alleged influence was beneficent and enlightening, or deleterious, and even corrosive, as M. Trudel claims. As is the case with most human beings, Voltaire represented a compound of good and bad characteristics—a curious assemblage of contradictions; he was an exponent of tolerance who was intolerant on occasion; a relentless foe of fanaticism who became a fanatic himself in violent diatribes against the Church. Yet, the better nature of this complex personality did assert itself often in the defense of many noble causes and ideals, such as free inquiry and free speech, the dignity of man, religious tolerance, hatred of persecution and the cruelty of man to man, onerous taxation, opposition to war and the death penalty. Such mental attitudes, so forcefully proclaimed by the "good Voltaire" have been harbored by a host of men of good will through the ages. Voltaire's pervasive influence has been due, in truth, more to the fact that he expressed them with far greater coherence and devastating wit than any one else, inasmuch as originality was not his forte. It is possible that in Canada, as in the United States, there existed a few men who believed fervently in some of the liberal ideas which were the common property of the age. Hence, to ascribe all liberal thinking as proceeding from Voltaire appears to be a fundamental fallacy in M. Trudel's premise.

Another basic fallacy, which leaves the critical reader unconvinced, is the frequent recourse to comparisons with quotations from *Le Traité de la Tolérance* as examples of the "ravages" upon the French Canadian mind inflicted by contact with Voltaire's writings. Frequently cited also as proof of the "ravages", is his opposition to the death penalty, an attitude adopted by many Canadian intellectuals who remained good Christians nevertheless. The terms "ravages" and "diabolique" are obviously employed to lend force to the thesis of a widespread baleful influence, but such strong terms would have been more appropriate if irrefutable proof had been adduced of an unmistakably anti-religious feeling on the part of liberals, of an unmistakably anti-religious feeling on the part of liberals. While it is true that the attitude of the High Clergy, on certain occasions (such as the Rebellion of 1837-38), did give rise to better criticism by some non-conformists, none ever to my knowledge imitate the irreverent manner of Voltaire—his flippant mockery and his scurrilous diatribes against religion itself, not merely in opposition

to erring representatives of the Church. By and large, Canadians evince no inclination to undermine religious values, dogmas or ceremonial. Most intellectuals who have ventured to oppose an attitude of the hierarchy, have been guilty merely of rejecting the concept of any man's infallibility; they might also be chargeable with the assumption that all organizations are composed of human beings of varying degrees of intellectual endowment. Most recognize the undeniable merit of the clergy as a group, with special emphasis upon the selfless and devoted priests. Definitely, this is not a voltarian attitude.

Vigorous disapproval of the Inquisition, cited as another example of voltarianism, may or may not have been inspired by Voltaire. But who in this day and age would hold that against any civilized man? M. Trudel claims that L. A. Dessaulles, journalist and a leader of the "Institut Canadien" fulfilled a wish of Voltaire in his essay in praise and in defense of Galileo. Was it wrong to speak out against obscurantism in the seventeenth century on the part of civil authorities as well as ecclesiastical? Dessaulles is described by Mr. Trudel as "a stubborn journalist determined to carry on a diabolical struggle to the very end"!

In refutation of the claim that Voltaire was the one and only teacher of all those in conflict with the popular and traditional mental attitudes, it is of paramount importance to point out that the thinking of nineteenth century leaders of independent opinion was conditioned largely by domestic problems, namely: by Canadian economic and educational problems, and by historical events, as well as by the broader questions of universal interest, such as freedom of the mind, tolerance, obscurantism, the monarchical form of government as opposed to the republican, etc. When the great Garneau vehemently condemned the exclusion from New France of some three hundred thousands of Protestants after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he was doubtless inspired more by patriotic motives than by Voltaire's virulent attacks against the Church. Whether he was in error in his assumption that the colony could have been saved by such an addition of man-power, remains a matter of opinion. Condemnation of bigotry, which in this case was harmful both to France and Canada, cannot be classed as an example of vicious voltarianism. Before Voltaire, as a matter of fact, Montesquieu had censured the Revocation in the 85th Letter of his *Lettres persanes*. If Garneau had read Letter 117 of the same work, and not even consulted the inevitable Voltaire, Montesquieu's over-simplified theory of the Protestant nations' economic superiority might well have prompted him to discuss this moot question in its connection with this situation in his native land. Doubtless there are overtones of anti-clericalism in any discussion of this question, and, of course, the anti-religious "philosophes" did not confine themselves to overtones. As is well known, this problem of multiple facets and angles has attracted the attention of, and has been over-simplified by, many renowned authors besides Garneau, a company that includes Montesquieu, Voltaire, Mme de Staël and Michelet. In so far as French Canada is concerned,

it is obvious that the economic situation could not fail to interest any reflective mind concerned with the welfare and survival of the French in North America. Uppermost in Garneau's mind, apparently, was the indisputable fact of his Anglo-Canadian fellow-citizens' overwhelming economic superiority—not a "diabolical" impulse to attack the Church.

In 1865 L. A. Dessaulles published in his newspaper, *Le Pays*, a remarkable series of essays on the American Civil War, unveiling numerous barbarous aspects of slavery. Here again is an example of inspiration stemming from North American social institutions and political events, and certainly not originating in the mind of Voltaire, who died in 1778.

Perhaps the most striking example of "guilt by association of attitude and spirit" is that of the case of L. O. David, who is classed with the Voltairians because of a single essay in which he takes issue with the intervention of a few members of the hierarchy in political affairs. His thesis seems reasonable; it is simply an unequivocal demand that the clergy confine its activity to the direction of the spiritual life of the population and refrain from entering the arena of politics. In *Le Clergé canadien, sa mission, son œuvre*, M. Davis criticizes frankly, on a note of regret rather than asperity, the role of certain powerful churchmen in 1837, 1867 and 1896, when, in his opinion, these individuals failed to serve the best interests of their people. In discussing the events of 1896, to take a single instance, he condemns strongly the active part played by certain clergymen in the bitter campaign against Laurier and his Liberal party. Here again it is well-nigh impossible to grasp the connection between Voltaire and the discussion of a domestic problem involving neither an anti-religious spirit, nor anti-clericalism *per se*, but merely the questionable conduct of a handful of human beings subject, like anybody else, to error of judgment and excessive zeal. As is the case with other controversial writings brought to light by M. Trudel's informative dissertation, M. David's eloquent protest makes excellent reading for the student of Canadian history.

In the light of the data presented by M. Trudel's thought-provoking thesis, it is incontrovertible that a fraction of French Canada's élite offers evidence of intellectual and emotional affinity with the liberal and non-conformist thinkers of France's eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the parallels drawn will fail to convince critical and neutral readers that the influence could have been evil, inasmuch as they reveal, for the most part, the more generous and idealistic impulses of eighteenth century thought—not the virulent anti-religious propaganda or passages offending the reader's sense of decorum or decency. Had the impact of voltairianism been so potent as to warrant the use of the term "ravages" upon the Canadian mind, it surely would have projected itself well beyond the orbit of a coterie of journalists and lecturers, such as the "Institut" group. The fact remains that hardly any big names in the history of French Canadian *belles lettres* can be accused of a lively interest in general ideas: social, humanitarian or political. Few have strayed from the intellectual norm.

M. Trudel's contribution is considerable, despite his failure to find convincing evidence of any enduring evil influences from France. He does acquaint the non-specialist with eager and questioning minds, impelled perhaps by their "esprit frondeur", to discuss and analyse problems of universal and local interest. Valuable and highly informative are the data on the "Institut Canadien de Montréal" called by some a "foyer de libéralisme" and judged by others, including M. Trudel, to be a "foyer de voltarianisme". Literary historian Lareau praises highly this group of keen and perceptive minds, whose aim of untrammelled enlightenment and progress of humanity, commands the respect of free men, despite certain excesses due to boundless enthusiasm and zeal. If external pressures had not caused the dispersion of this group in 1878, it might well have helped to extend the horizon of creative literature to the realm of stimulating ideas and concern for human values. In so far as such values are concerned, French Canadian literature has only recently come of age with the development of the novel.

Regardless of any evaluation of mental and emotional attitudes, it remains of the highest importance to be informed of the existence of a hard core of liberalism in nineteenth century French Canada. This fact is all the more significant since it refutes the generally accepted impression, especially in the United States, that intellectual conformity has been, and still is, the rule in that country. Despite occasional revolts against certain attitudes of clerical authorities in moments of crisis, practically no independent thinker, except the apostate, Chiniquy, strayed from the fold of the Church. If M. Trudel has failed to prove that an articulate minority of intellectuals exerted an evil influence because of their subservience to French eighteenth century masters, he does effectively demonstrate that these free spirits frequently abided by what is best in the French tradition, namely: respect for the human mind, frank and uninhibited communication between free men, as well as an intellectual probity giving rise at times to a manifestation of a typical French trait, "l'esprit fondeur". In Canada, as in other nations of democratic institutions, literary expression occupies more than one mansion. If such a condition were not allowed to prevail, the death knell of still another civilization and culture would be heard in that land.

RESOLUTIONS (Continued from Page 3)

5. Moved that the executive of the O.M.L.T.A. study the problem of supplementary reading in consultation with the O.S.S.T.F. Moderns Committee and the Department, with a view to encouraging uniformity in the amount of reading required throughout the schools of Ontario.
6. Moved that we ask the Department of Education to give to the teachers of Grade XIII work in Modern Languages at least equal representation with the Universities on the committee which selects the Upper School Reading texts, these teachers to be appointed by the O.M.L.T.A. Executive.
7. Moved that these above mentioned Grade XIII teachers function as a sub-committee of the O.M.L.T.A. executive.

Robert DeMille, Secretary, O.M.L.T.A.

COMMON ERRORS IN WRITTEN FRENCH

An address by Prof. R. W. Torrens, University of Western Ontario,
at the Annual Convention of the O.M.L.T.A., April 20, 1954

May I take one moment before proceeding to my very brief remarks to tell you how pleased I was to be invited to speak to you at this time and to say how flattered I was to be included on a "practical hour". University professors are so frequently thought to be dreamers lost in realms of fancy or else narrow lovers of theory, that I feel somehow awarded a special distinction by your invitation. Upon my retirement (many years hence, let me hasten to add lest I give any colleagues who happen to be listening a false hope of imminent deliverance) upon my retirement, then, if no other honors or achievements can be found to mention, let it be remembered to my credit that at least once in my career I was thought capable of being "practical".

When first I was invited to take part in this program, I was assigned the topic: "Common Written Errors in French". At some point in the preparation of your announcements that topic was changed to: "Common Speech Errors in French". With your permission I am going to speak on the subject originally given me since I had already prepared it and since I find that it does not overlap any other part of this hour. If any of you were lured to this hall by the anticipation of important revelations in the field of "speech", may I say, "en passant", that of many errors of that variety, the ones I find most common and most annoying are: 1. pronunciation of silent letters; 2. failure to elide properly; 3. the confusion of the French nasal sounds.

Now for written errors as found at University. Many of these may be classed as "careless" errors which are usually recognized at once by the student as soon as a teacher states that there is a mistake in the sentence under consideration. In this category I would list the failure to make the verb agree with the subject, i.e. "je l'a reconnu" or "c'est moi qui a trouvé le crayon" or "les enfants qui l'a salué." In this class I would include the failure to make an adjective agree with the noun or pronoun that it modifies. This error is found more often than you would believe, and particularly when the adjective stands in the predicate and modifies a pronoun subject, i.e. "elles sont grand".

Next I would list errors not so obvious to our students. One which is very common is the use of a prepositional phrase in place of the indirect pronoun object of the verb. Here the student will not so readily admit his error. He may sometimes argue that since "il pense à moi" is correct, "il donne à moi" should be acceptable also. He will frequently wonder why one should say "il s'est présenté à elle", but not "il l'a présenté à moi." And since even dictionaries set down in black and white for all to read that "obéir à" means "to obey", why doesn't one translate: "he obeys her" as "il obéit à elle"?

An error which is all too common is the placing of one or more pronoun objects in incorrect order before the verb. Most of our students can recite like a shot "me, te, se, nous, vous, before le, les, before lui, leur, before y, before en" but many of them immediately after reciting this table will write down "je le vous donnerai".

After being convinced that "to rest" is not "rester" but "se reposer" most students will learn without too much effort to say "nous nous reposons" and not "nous se reposons". The incidence or error jumps quickly, however,

when the reflexive occurs in the infinitive. Many students will write "il nous a dit de se reposer" and say quite righteously, when corrected, that the vocabulary says that "to rest" is "se reposer" and the sentence reads "he told us to rest" "Isn't that the same?" Even more errors are to be expected when the reflexive infinitive comes at the beginning of the sentence—"après s'être reposé, nous avons pris le dîner" is very common—one may even find an occasional "après s'avoir reposé" (let's take time out to shudder).

Another type of error results from a kind of woodenness on the part of student. Having said correctly "j'ai fait la connaissance de votre père", he will insist on saying "j'ai fait la connaissance de lui". Similarly some student will say correctly "avant d'étudier la leçon" and will then proceed to say "avant de trois heures". We must be more sympathetic, of course, when a lad or lass has said "j'ai manqué le train" and then wonders why "je la manque" is not "I miss her". Only a perverse people, after all, would say "elle me manque" instead of "je la manque".

Many of my students seem never to have realized that "will" may sometimes indicate volition, rather than the future tense; and as many, if not more, are astonished that "would" may mean "used to" on some occasions. Some seem quite unconvinced when told repeatedly that although "l'un l'autre" certainly means "each other", it should be used to clarify and not to replace the reciprocal reflexive form.

My student friends are particularly amazed that the French will say "il est possible que j'y aille" and will then say in affirmation "oui, c'est possible". That matter of "ce" or "il" is of course a demon because of the many types of sentences which require us to choose between them. You will be doing all concerned a great favor if you will point out with great perseverance the different types of expressions which begin with "it" as subject of the verb "to be".

Try to persuade them too that "s'asseyant" denotes action, whereas "assis" denotes result. Then there will be fewer who will translate: "I saw her sitting in the garden" as "Je l'ai vue s'asseyant dans le jardin". And try, too, to show them why we say "je ME suis lavé la figure" but not "je ME suis levé la main droite."

I would be happier if more students coming to University understood the difference between "devoir" and "faillir" and if more of them were to understand that "j'étais blessé" indicates condition and not action. I would also suggest to you more stress on recognition of the different types of subordinate clauses in which the subjunctive must be used and more light on the question of when we do or do not use the subjunctive after superlatives.

I know from long experience that no matter how many times students are corrected, some of them never learn to avoid certain errors. I am certain that you have all laboured over the points which I have listed. I know that if our University freshmen say "J'ai dix-huit" in reply to "Quel âge avez-vous" or answer "Oui, je suis" when asked "Vous servez-vous de mon livre" it is not that you have encouraged them in those follies. Just keep on insisting that "retourner" is not a synonym for "rendre" and that "espérer" is not followed by the subjunctive. You will certainly have your reward—in Heaven!

And now, as I conclude these remarks, may I beg your pardon for bringing so many of my coals to your Newcastle. I can only say by way of excuse that I was asked to bring them here.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Before touching briefly on some of the practical problems connected with supplementary reading, I wonder if it would not be useful to ask ourselves, why do we have supplementary reading?

This may seem like a superfluous question, but I am sorry to say there are schools in Ontario which are not doing the prescribed extensive reading, even in Grade XIII. Because of this the Department recently decided to abandon the prescription of a set number of pages per grade and to urge the teachers to encourage the pupils to read as much as possible. Whether this new approach will have the desired effect, remains to be seen. This is a serious problem we must face—to find out why extensive reading is not being done in some schools and what we can do to help.

Why, then, do we have supplementary reading? (1) The Ontario Courses of Study in Modern Languages list three objectives—reading, speaking and writing. Of these three skills, reading is the most important because it is the most enduring and useful. The primary aim of the reading course is to develop the pupil's ability to read for understanding and enjoyment. (2) The ability to comprehend is tested in sight passage on all examinations in most grades. The amount of sight on the Upper School authors examination has been increasing. Who knows but we may some day go back to the days when the sight counted for 80% of the final paper? It seems necessary, then, to re-emphasize that pupils cannot be prepared for sight reading by intensive reading in class alone.

Since we want pupils to read for enjoyment and understanding, it follows that we must select books that will be (1) of interest to young people, and (2) within their reading range. Because their interest and reading abilities vary, it is clear that sets of books are not the answer. There seems to be no better way than for the teacher to walk into a classroom with an armful of books of varying difficulty and content and to allow the pupils to choose, with the help of the teacher, of course. This means that the teacher should be familiar with the insides of some of the books as well as with the abilities of the pupils.

The teacher can find out more about the pupils' reactions to the content and degree of difficulty of the book by asking him on his reading report blank to say if he did or did not like the book and why, and if it was too difficult or too easy or just right. This form will also contain spaces for the title of the book, the number of pages read (exclusive of pictures, exercises and vocabulary) and a brief résumé of the plot in English.

Most schools use cards on which are recorded the name of the pupil, the grade, the year, the name of the book and the number of pages read. Sometimes these cards accompany the pupil when he transfers to another school.

When handing out books, teachers who set a deadline for the completion of the reading seem to get the best results. Two or three weeks will give even the weakest pupil ample time to finish. It is, of course, important to make clear to the classes the reasons for supplementary reading discussed above and to try to "sell" each book.

One final word about the books themselves. The members of the Editorial Board of the "Review" trust that the magazine has been of some help to teachers in guiding their purchase of new books. We review every book that comes in, even if only briefly, and we try to give an honest estimate of it. Perhaps the time has come again for the "Review" to undertake a survey of the extensive reading books recommended by teachers. Any questions about supplementary reading submitted to the Editorial Board will receive prompt attention.

M. SNIDERMAN,
Port Credit High School.

LE NOTAIRE DU HAVRE

Soon after the announcement of "Le Notaire du Havre" as the Grade XIII French Authors text for next year, I rashly accepted the Editor's invitation to write down some suggestions for teaching this book. Since then it has become evident, from a review in this journal and from remarks made at the OMLTA meetings, that some look upon the selection of this novel with a jaundiced eye. The inevitable effect of this development is to give a defensive cast to this article, and I must make my position clear at once.

I am not defending the committee of selection, with which I had nothing to do, though it should be pointed out that they did recommend the reduction of the text to normal length by the allocation of three chapters for extensive reading, and it was only through inadvertance that the Department failed to indicate this decision at the same time as the announcement of the choice of text. I hope I am not unconsciously bristling in any proprietary sense as one of the editors of this text. What I am concerned about is the danger of a defeatist approach to the novel, the risk of appraisal coloured by discouraged pre-judgments. It is a horrible thought that teachers and students all over the province may be facing the book in the fall with a kind of grim resignation. I know that at this time of year, when everyone is exhausted from the current campaign, it is difficult to look forward to anything unfamiliar with enthusiasm, and easy to be depressed at rumours of the difficulty and "unsuitability" of next year's text.. In my opinion the novel in its present edition will defend itself, if given a fair chance, and my job, as I see it, is to say why I think so.

My contention is more than a matter of opinion, for "Le Notaire du Havre" has proved for several years to be one of the most popular texts in first-year classes at the University of Toronto. Lest this fact seem to support the argument of the book's unsuitability for Grade XIII, let me add quickly that its appeal has been just as great to the less mature and poorly prepared students as to those more advanced. Furthermore, these university students covered the book in about fifteen class periods, and until this spring they were working with an unannotated French edition. With the very full vocabulary (including notes) provided by the new school edition, the difficulty of the book is greatly reduced. Professor Humphreys' admirable exercises also provide a wealth of grammatical material closely related to the text, as well as questionnaires and prose passages for translation that afford a useful review of each chapter.

One of the appeals of "Le Notaire du Havre" is the recognized place it holds as a distinguished novel by a leading contemporary French writer.

Quite apart from the added satisfaction of this feature for teachers who have to live with the book for a year on such intimate terms, I suggest that they would make a mistake not to capitalize early on this feature of the book to arouse student interest. This is where the introduction comes in, for it was not written simply as a compendium of information for the occasional reader who might be curious about the author. It was written to be, in large part, an "introduction" in the sense of an opportunity for the reader to meet and get to know the writer before starting to listen to what he has to say. This is particularly important for a writer as personal as Duhamel, and I would urge that teachers take time to go over with students at least the first half of the Introduction (10 pages, to p.xxiv) during a period or two at the beginning of the year. In this way a student will have some acquaintance with Duhamel's own childhood and youth, his active rôle in the two world wars, his range and stature as a writer, his development from the war-time sketches of "*Vie des Martyrs*" to the Pasquier novels. The student will be introduced as well to Duhamel's conception of civilization and criticisms of our tendency to define progress in material terms, and I predict that this will elicit not only some lively discussion but, more important, an "atmosphere of discussion" which will encourage continuing spontaneous response from students to many aspects of the novel. I am suggesting, of course, that this be not formal testing of information acquired, but rather informal conversation between teacher and students based on the Introduction (or on any reading the teacher may have done in Duhamel's other writings) to the end that the approach to author and book may be anything but perfunctory, that from the start the author may be a living person, whose life and ideas and way of saying things are full of interest for us all.

It might be desirable to make this introductory period or two as natural and spontaneous as possible by conducting it in English (as the Introduction was written in English for the same reason), with an occasional "Comment dit-on cela en français?" to anticipate later give and take in French.

The remainder of the Introduction, particularly the glimpses of what happens in later novels of the Pasquier Chronicle, the evidence of the extent of autobiography in the novel, and the discussion of the "lesson" of the novel can better be left until the reading has been completed, as can the special message that Duhamel wrote for this edition. Pages xxviii and xxix, however, contain some suggestions for things to watch for in Duhamel's handling of his material that might be usefully pointed out to students early in their reading.

In anticipating spontaneous student reactions to many things in the novel, I have already suggested what to me is one of the greatest appeals of the book and proof of its eminent suitability for young students. For the most part it is close to life, within the realm of the student's experience or sympathy. I do not imply that life as portrayed through Laurent Pasquier's eyes will all be familiar. Indeed part of its appeal is precisely the intimate picture it affords of a French bourgeois family, a French school, the "feel" of the city of Paris to a French small boy, and so on. Yet many of the experiences that Laurent has or witnesses are universal in character or evoke parallel episodes in the memories of readers in any country. Some teachers will want to supplement the prepared questionnaires with questions drawing out memories from the students' own childhood, and I think they will find

that the wealth of simple, natural conversation recorded in the novel is of real value in stimulating and improving students' ability to converse in French.

One of the most striking aspects of the book is the sharpness of Duhamel's observation, both of people and things, the vividness with which, usually by a few deft touches, they are made to live for us. The consequence of this can be the enrichment of our own experience by sharing the acuteness of his vision and other sense impressions, his wide range of emotion from quiet amusement to high comedy, from compassion to fear and anguish. This book is a treasure house of material for a teacher to use in developing, simply and naturally, a student's awareness of the skill with which the author obtains these effects, and that is a long step toward literary appreciation.

This process also involves a considerable enrichment of linguistic knowledge and appreciation, which may sometimes tax the ingenuity of teacher as well as student, though every effort within reason has been made to solve all the real difficulties in the vocabulary. There are many passages which demand and will reward a pause for translation into a good English equivalent. After all, we must not forget the good students who will appreciate a lively, intelligent and imaginative use of language, and the slower ones cannot help profiting enormously by the increased quantity and elasticity of their own vocabulary.

I have said nothing about the plot, for that is simple enough, though it is worth making sure that the student appreciates the skill with which the author manipulates the rise and fall of the suspense involved in the long wait for the letter from Le Havre, and the beautiful irony of the scene where it finally arrives. The question of plot does, however, bring up the problem of how to handle Chapters 6, 7 and 10, which have been set aside for extensive reading. They cannot be skipped, because there is in Chapter 6 an important development in the friendship of Laurent and Désirée; in Chapter 7, the initial appearance and characterization of the Courtois family; and in all three chapters, significant preparation for Désirée's eventual despair. I can only suggest that these chapters be assigned for rapid reading and quickly reviewed by general questioning as they are reached. All three contain delightful incidents which will hold the attention of students, and the last page of Chapter 10 contains one of my favourite passages in the novel.

I must mention three misprints. On page 13, l. 1, read a comma for the period after *ombre*; p. 105, l. 15, read *elle* for *elles*; and on page 169, l. 5, read "securities". Note also two omissions from the vocabulary: *gerbe* f. sheaf, and *guirlande* f. garland, festoon, wreath. Add also *solitaire* m. hermit, lone wolf. If other errors or inadequacies are discovered, we should be glad to have them pointed out to us.

I do not, of course, expect everyone to accept unchallenged my enthusiasm for Duhamel's work, and I have a few minor reservations myself. I am, however, fairly confident that teachers and students alike will find a close study of this book a rewarding experience, and will not soon forget the rich variety of incident and portraiture, not only the comic highlights like M. Courtois and the piano stool and Papa's epic "colères" or the tragic fate of Désirée Wasselín, but the day to day life of the "clan Pasquier", "les douceurs et les misères—il faut tout voir et tout comprendre — d'une chaude tribu vivante."

C. D. Rouillard.

BOOKS REVIEWS

PARLONS FRANÇAIS, Book II, by W. F. H. Whitmarsh and G. A. Klinck.
440 pages. Longmans, Green, 1954, \$2.25.

PRACTICAL FRENCH REVIEW, by F. B. Barton and E. H. Sirick. 277
pages. Appleton-Century-Crofts (Ryerson), 1954, \$2.50.

Now that the Ontario Department of Education has eliminated the reading selections of *Cours Moyen*, Pt. II as examinable material, the time has presumably come, as in German, to permit the use of an alternative French grammar. The ideal situation would, of course, be one in which each teacher could choose his own text and a minimum course of study would assure reasonable uniformity of content for examination purposes and the maintenance of standards.

The two books at hand might very well be considered as alternatives to *Cours Moyen*, Parts I and II. The first is an adaption by Dr. G. A. Klinck of a third and fourth book by W. F. H. Whitmarsh and follows *Parlons Français, Book I*. Dr. Klinck's contributions include the introduction on French civilization; notes on pronunciation; a phonetics chart; vocabulary lists, and phonetic transcriptions thereof, after each reading selection; pronunciation exercises and verb charts. The authors intended Lessons 1-28 to serve as the basis for the work in Grade XI and Lessons 29-50 for that in Grade XII, but, as in the case of *Parlons Français, Book I*, there is such a superabundance of material, however good, that such an arrangement will not be possible. The book has enough material for Grades XI, XII and XIII, and with some additions (causative "faire", for example) might prove acceptable.

Excellent features of the book are the pronunciation exercises in every lesson; the frequent essay topics; the abundance of review material with reference to the Grammar summary at the back; and the verb charts.

The content of the grammar and the sequence of the material may surprise because it is different, but only a trial in the classroom will settle the questions as to their suitability and difficulty.

The second book, *Practical French Review*, will arouse envy in the hearts of all Grade XIII teachers because of its orderly, clear and comprehensive presentation of the grammar, from the article to the subjunctive. Each of the 21 lessons contains a grammar lesson; a reading selection; a questionnaire based on it; a connected "prose", mostly in dialogue; drill exercises of various kinds, oral and written; and a verb review, including sentences.

With the addition of pronunciation exercises and some essay topics, this would make a fine Grade XIII text. M. S.

(1) **NOS VOISINS FRANÇAIS**, by Leile Tomlinson, 325 pages, Oxford, 1954, \$1.50.

(2) **REVIEW AND PROGRESS IN FRENCH**, by C. S. Parker, 286 pages, Dryden Press (Ryerson), 1953, \$2.90.

These two texts are recommended for consideration by the Department of Education as alternatives to those prescribed for Grades IX and X and for Grade XIII.

The first, authorized for use in the schools of Alberta, is attractively bound and illustrated, and aims to appeal as the title indicates, to the interest of boys and girls in a foreign people—their capital, the post office, meals, the movies, etc. The book starts with a chapter on "Les Sons du Français" written simply and briefly for the pupils and paving the way for pronunciation exercises in each of the thirty lessons. Each lesson includes a short English paragraph about France, a brief French text with illustrations, a treatment of the Grammar in English, and a variety of exercises, including English into French. Occasionally there is an "Histoire en Images", an exercise in elementary free composition, and suggestions for games. After every five lessons there is a revision of all the material to date. Throughout, the accent is on repetition, oral and written, of the very practical material.

Let me hasten to add that this is not an easy text. It contains more material than can be adequately covered in two years. Some lessons have perhaps too much grammar material and insufficient exercises. But this is a promising book and deserves a trial in the classroom.

The second book starts with the assumption that the student remembers very little of what he has been taught and reviews the most elementary points of grammar with plenty of practice. Each of the twenty-seven lessons begins with a number of model French sentences for pronunciation, memorization and analysis (there are no reading passages), followed by a grammar analysis, verb and word study, and oral and written exercises of various kinds, including English into French. The vocabulary of the model sentences is very practical. The text provides admirable coverage of the Grammar material of *Cours Moyen*, Parts I and II, and is highly recommended for trial.

M. S.

BRIEFLY NOTED.

LES TROIS AVEUGLES ET AUTRES CONTES, edited by E. Bruce Lockhart, 112 pages including 60 pages of text, vocabulary and exercises, Oxford Press, 1954, 65c.

Another in the series of New Oxford French Readers, this is based on medieval "fableaux" and will suit the better French student and reader in Grades XII and XIII.

M. S.

ESSAY-CRAFT FOR MIDDLE FORMS by P. L. Helm, M.A., 175 pages, Price 85c., MacMillan, Toronto, 1947.

Can your pupils write correct, effective English? Mr. Helm's method of teaching composition is to use an uncorrected essay as a model for discussion and written exercises.

In his book, he has taken thirty brief essays written by English schoolboys on topics varying from "The Melbourne Centenary Air Race" to "Bells". After each essay, there is a discussion of the points of style, spelling errors, and about two pages of foot-notes correcting each error with emphasis upon grammar, punctuation, and word meaning. Finally, grammatical, constructional, and vocabulary exercises arising from the essay are presented. At the end of the book are a number of "fair-copy" essays which may be used as commendable models of student achievement. None of the essays, however, are graded.

Mr. Helm has tried to cover all the difficulties of the pupils whose essays have been used, and to produce a book which will give individual tuition to a complete middle-school class at once. Although his method has some validity, the text should be revised for use in Canadian schools.

—W. E. Ward, Port Credit High School.

LIRA ESPANOLA: Representative Spanish Lyric Poets (15th to 20th centuries). Selected and edited with critical introduction, notes and glossary by Diego Marín. Privately printed by offset process (Ryerson Press), 1954. x, 377 pages. Price: \$2.75.

The method employed by the editor in this volume is that of presenting a small number of the best poets (13 plus 14 anonymous ballads). Thus he is able to include several selections by each. The Pre-Renaissance, Renaissance and Golden Age periods are represented by the ballads and six poets, the eighteenth century by one, the nineteenth century by two, and the modern period by four (Rubén Darío, for obvious reasons, being chosen to represent Spanish America). This method of critical selection is of great value pedagogically, for it allows the student to become well acquainted with a certain poet, before moving on to the next. In addition, this anthology, through its introduction and notes, provides the necessary back-ground material so important for an over-all picture and for the placing of the poets in question in their proper milieu.

All of the critical material is worthy of praise. The "Introducción general" comments on the progress of Spanish poetry and carefully studies versification and verse forms as well as defining figures of speech. This "Introducción" and the introductory pages at the beginning of each chapter are in Spanish. The scholarly notes translating difficult passages and explaining the texts are in English, as is the Glossary, where the meanings provided are restricted to the pertinent ones. The accurate and full lists of editions, critical works and translations (into English), in the case of each poet, would not fail to impress a bibliographer. The complimentary "Report by the Humanities Research Council of Canada, December, 1952," quoted on page iii (preface) is an accurate one. *Lira española* should indeed be in every high school and college library where there is an interest in Spanish and in the hands of every instructor and advanced student of Spain's language and culture.

J. H. P.

UGO FOSCOLO: AN ITALIAN IN REGENCY ENGLAND. By E. R. Vincent. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1953. viii, 254 pages.

Professor Vincent is to be commended highly for bringing to light the last eleven years of the life of Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827), "the brilliant figure that once blazed across the Regency scene . . . in those days . . . as famous in England as he still is in Italy (p.1)." "In a scholarly and exhaustive work, the author traces the literary activity and the severe trials experienced by the poet from the time of his first arrival in England in 1816 to his death. Fiery, impassioned and volatile, frequently misunderstood as he was both by Wordsworth and Scott, Foscolo, nevertheless, won the esteem of a large number of friends. When the poet first appeared in England, he was "a violent polemical, almost demented figure of erratic genius (p. 13)", a poet-patriot who had defied Napoleon and refused to bow to the Austrians. Professor Vincent has painted Foscolo as he was: neither as the saint that he seemed to Mazzini, nor as unbearably proud, as he appeared to Gabriele Rossetti, both of whom were exiles too in an England that was then the haven of European Liberalism. The author views the poet as a political refugee without any other means of support than his own literary talent and with no sense of proportion in financial matters. Foscolo was an apparently contradictory blending of classicism, as in *Dei Sepolcri* (1806), his most famous poem, and of romanticism as in his epistolary novel, *Le' Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1802). Professor Vincent's book lends substantial validity to the assertion often made that Foscolo himself is the hero of his novel, in which the protagonist finds a solution to his problems in suicide. Foscolo's life, like that of Jacopo Ortis, is tragic, "out of joint" with the splendour of early nineteenth century England. An impartial, abundantly documented work, the book is a sound piece of research carried out by a conscientious scholar, perhaps the greatest living authority on the poet. Recognition of his work in Italy has already been accorded Professor Vincent in the form of a translation soon to be published.

University of Toronto.

J. A. Molinaro.

EN LA ARDIENTE OSCURIDAD (Drama en tres actos), by Antonio Buero Vallejo. Edited by Samuel A. Wofsy, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954, xxi, 196 pages.

This full-length play, by a leading contemporary Spanish dramatist, was first performed in 1950, in Madrid. An English version has been successfully given at the editor's University of California at Santa Barbara. The edition here presented has been well prepared, with vocabulary, footnotes, and exercises for conversation, composition and idiom study. The theme of the play, which deals with life in an institution for the blind, is a serious one, indeed a "disturbing" one, as Professor Juan R. Castelano indicates in his excellent introductory pages and in his recent article, "Un nuevo comediógrafo español: A. Buero Vallejo" (*Hispania*, XXXVII, 1954, 17-25). The play, in Dr. Wofsy's edition, is to be recommended to students of the contemporary Spanish theatre and to intermediate students of language.

J. H. P.

INDEX TO VOLUMES I -- X

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

An Alternative Introduction to French,
McIntyre, Neil A.; VI, 2, 1949-50, p. 26

An Approach to Grade XII French,
DeMille, Robert; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 20

Basic Equipment; II, 1, 1945 p. 16

Boiling Down and Pointing Up.
Wallace, J. B.; VI, 2, 1950 p. 6

Common-Sense Methods.
Morgan, J. R. H.; III, 1, 1946, p. 14

Concerning Upper School French.
Paul, Muriel, E., and Kerr, Helen M.; VII, 1, 1950, p. 27

Editorials; 1, 2, 1944, p. 3; 1, 4, 1945,
p. 3; II, 1, 1945, p. 3; II, 2, 1945, p. 3

French in Alberta, Dept. of Education,
Alberta IV, 2, 1948, p. 20

From Coast to Coast, Klinck, G. A.; IV,
1, 1947, p. 4

The Gap Between Grade X and XI.
Fraser, G. Earl; VIII, 2, 1952, p. 12

The Importance of German, Lewis, C.;
II, 3, 1946, p. 5

The Importance of Studying Spanish,
Garcia, J. U.; I, 1, 1944 p. 11

The Language Curtain, Parker, Wm.
R.; X, 3, 1954, p. 7

Minimum Curriculum, Beattie, William;
VI, 2, 1950, p. 24

*Modern Foreign Languages in the War
Crisis,* Girard, Daniel; I, 3, 1945, p. 11

New Standards for Language Teachers,
Luzenska, Kunda; IV, 2, 1948, p. 8

On the Grade XIII Text as Literature,
Joliet Eugène; IX, 2, 1953 p. 25

An Open Letter to Miss Gladys Edmondson, MacDonald, Greta; VII, 1, 1950, 29

*The Place of Modern Languages in the
Secondary School Curriculum,* Morgan,
J. R. H.; VI, 2, 1950, p. 3

*A Plea for an Adequate Approach to
the Four-Point Objective,* Fraser, G.
Earl; VIII, 1, 1951 p. 15

Quinze Ans Après, White, D. Margaret;
VI, 3, 1950, p. 15

Raising Our Sights, Lacey, A.; III, 3,
1947, p. 3

*Report of O.M.L.T.A. Committee on
Curriculum;* VIII, 1, 1951, p. 7

Syrup From Saps, Wallace, J. B.;
VI, 3, 1950, p. 9

*The Teaching of English and French
as Second Languages,* Taillon, Léopold;
IV, 3 and 4, 1948 p. 11

*Translation in Grade XIII Authors Ex-
amination,* Goldstick, Isadore; IX; 2,
1953 p. 16

Words, Lacey, A.; III, 4, 1947, p. 3

Why Study French?, Klinck, G. A.;
I, 2, 1944 p. 12

Why Teach a Foreign Language?,
Althouse, J. G.; IV, 3 and 4, 1948, p. 5

AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS AND REALIA

GENERAL

*Attractive Visual Aids for Language
Teaching;* III, 3, 1947 p. 49

Audio-Visual Aids, Klinck, G. A.; VII
2, 1951 p. 1

The Bilingual Machine, Newsweek; X,
2, 1954, p. 24

Chansonnieres; I, 2, 1944 p. 31

Colour Game, Herber, Katherine H.;
II, 2, 1945, p. 29

A Continued Story, Smith, Isabelle;
II, 2, 1945, p. 31

The Effective Use of Maps, Barclay, E.
C.; I, 4, 1945, p. 16

Film Guide, I, 2, 1944, p. 48; I, 3, 1945,
p. 34; II, 2, 1945, p. 44

A Language Lab, New York State
Teachers' Bulletin; X, 2, 1954, p. 24

Lingua-Games and Lingua-Stix.
Wagner, Rudolf F.; IX, 4, 1953, p. 16

Make the Subject Live, Depew, Mary E.;
I, 1, 1944, p. 21

Make Use of Advertisements, Edmon-
son, Gladys; I, 4, 1945 p. 29

Material for the School Exhibition,
Whitton, F. A.; I, 3, 1945 p. 19

Pictures and Contests; I, 1, 1944, p. 24

Realia, Stock, Marie; VII, 2, 1951, p.
22; VII, 3, 1951, p. 20; VII, 4, 1951,
p. 20; VIII, 4, 1951, p. 20; VIII, 1,
1951, p. 26; IX, 2, 1953, p. 24; X, 1,
1953, p. 47

Suggestions for Your Library of Records,
VI, 3, 1950, p. 21

Talking Books, Sniderman, M.; X, 3,
1954, p. 20

The Tape Recorder, Gray, Wm. T.; VIII
2, 1952, p. 15

*The Tape Recorder and Its Uses in
School,* Hodgins, A. F. W.; VII, 1,
1950, p. 36

Tape Recordings, Howard, Desmond;
VIII, 4, 1952 p. 17

A Teacher's Bag of Tricks, Howard,
Desmond; III, 3, 1947, p. 9

Useful Projects, Wilkins, Dorothy;
I, 4, 1945 p. 15

AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS AND REALIA
FRENCH

Les Aventures du Docteur Chartier.
Lapierre, Roméo; III, 3, 1947, p. 10

Beginning a Class. Adams, Ada A.; I, 1, 1944, p. 21

Bonne à Tout Faire. Finch, R.; II, 2, 1945, p. 16

Mr. Brûlé's Address. V, 1, 1948 p. 39

A Candle Lighting Service.
Edmondson, Gladys; II, 2, 1945, p. 28

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L'Alliance Française de Toronto, Lake Madeleine; VIII, 2, 1951 p. 44
French Ciné Club of University College; VIII, 1, 1951 p. 27
A French Club, Edmondson, Gladys; VII, 1, 1950 p. 31
A French Evening; II, 2, 1945, p. 29
French Night—Port Hope High School, Hammond, Lottie R., IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 57

A French Tea Hour, Belcher, Margaret; V, 3, 1949, p. 28-29
The Goethe Club; VII, 1, 1950, p. 56
The Goethe Society; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 27
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A New Language Association, Beaudoin, Emile; VI, 2, 1949 p. 5
Notre Soirée de français, Port Hope Students; IX, 1, 1952 p. 19
Organizing a French Club, Stock, Dora; I, 1, 1944 p. 19
Toronto Goethe Society; IV, 2, 1948, p. 26

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Conclusions, Corbett L. H.; IV, 2, 1948, p. 5
Curriculum Committee—Revision of "Do We Agree", Corbett, L. H.; V, 4, 1949 p. 28
Deputation meets Dr. Althouse, Lewis, Cecil; VI, 2, 1949 p. 29
The Emergency Fund; IV, 3-4, 1948, p. 60
The German Teachers' Committee, Lewis, Cecil; III, 1, 1946 p. 42
List of Contributors to the Emergency Fund; VII, 4, 1951 p. 24
1950 List of Subscribers; VI, 4, 1950, p. 36; VII, 1, 1950, p. 56
A New Era of Co-operation; VI, 4, 1950, p. 26
A New Text Book Committee, Steels, H. C.; X, 1, 1953 p. 5
Questionnaire; III, 3, 1947, p. 44
Remerciements; VII, 4, 1951 p. 1
Report of Committee of the O.M.L.T.A. on an Oral Examination in French, Jeanneret, F. C. A.; VII, 4, 1950, p. 11
Resolution re. Beginning German in Grade X; VI, 4, 1950, p. 26
A Tribute to Prof. Jeanneret, Klinek, G. A.; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 5
What Can Be Done? Corbett, L. H.; III, 2, 1947 p. 47

DICTATION TESTS

French; III, 3, 1947, p. 16; V, 1, 1948, p. 47; VI, 2, 1949-50, p. 36; VI, 3, 1950, p. 28; VIII, 2, 1951-52, p. 34; VIII, 3, 1951-52, p. 25; IX, 2, 1953, p. 5; IX, 3, 1953, p. 19; X, 2, 1954, p. 29
German; V, 1, 1948, p. 47

EXAMINATIONS

How To Set a Fair Examination, Klinek, G. A.; V, 1, 1948 p. 40
Suggestions For Setting Examinations, Thomson, D. C.; IV, 1, 1947, p. 19
Supplementary Reading Tests:
D'Artagnan, X, 1, 1953, p. 37
Sans Famille, X, 2, 1953, p. 40
Ted Bopp, X, 1, 1953, p. 36
Term Examinations—French:
September; II, 4, 1946, p. 25

Christmas: I, 1, 1944, p. 29; II, 1, 1945, p. 41; III, 1, 1946, p. 29; IV, 1, 1947, p. 31; V, 1, 1948, p. 45; VI, 1, 1949, p. 40; VII, 1, 1950, p. 46; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 31; IX, 1, 1952, p. 28; X, 1, 1953, p. 25.

Easter: I, 2, 1944, p. 33; II, 2, 1945, p. 47; III, 2, 1945, p. 46; III, 2, 1946, p. 28; IV, 2, 1947, p. 38; V, 2, 1948, p. 30; VI, 2, 1949, p. 37; VII, 2, 1950, p. 38; VIII, 2, 1951, p. 31; IX, 2, 1952, p. 26; X, 2, 1953, p. 30.

June: I, 3, 1945, p. 37; II, 3, 1946, p. 33; III, 3, 1947, p. 25; IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 33; V, 4, 1949, p. 7; VI, 3, 1950, p. 35; VII, 3, 1951, p. 27; VIII, 3, 1952, p. 27; IX, 3, 1953, p. 38; X, 3, 1954, p. 43.

Term Examinations—German:

September: II, 4, 1946, p. 28.

Christmas: I, 1, 1944, p. 39; II, 1, 1945, p. 51; III, 1, 1946, p. 36; IV, 1, 1947, p. 44; V, 1, 1948, p. 45; VI, 1, 1949, p. 40; VII, 1, 1950, p. 45; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 26; IX, 1, 1952, p. 33; X, 2, 1953, p. 35.

Easter: I, 2, 1944, p. 33; II, 2, 1945, p. 48; III, 2, 1946, p. 36; IV, 2, 1947, p. 38; V, 2, 1948, p. 38; VI, 2, 1949, p. 43; VII, 2, 1950, p. 40; VIII, 2, 1951, p. 36; IX, 2, 1952, p. 32; X, 2, 1953, p. 37.

June: II, 3, 1946, p. 38; III, 3, 1947, p. 36; IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 41; V, 4, 1949, p. 18; IV, 3, 1950, p. 42; VII, 3, 1951, p. 39; VIII, 3, 1952, p. 32.

Term Examinations—Spanish:

September: II, 4, 1946, p. 30.

Christmas: III, 1, 1946, p. 39; VII, 1, 1950, p. 43.

Easter: II, 2, 1945, p. 47; III, 2, 1947, p. 39.

June: III, 3, 1947, p. 39; IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 46; V, 4, 1949, p. 23; VII, 3, 1951, p. 41.

Upper School Examinations:

A Challenge, Wilkins, Dorothy; II, 2, 1945 p. 37

L'Examen de l'Upper School, Leduc, J., III, 2, 1947 p. 23

A Few Thoughts on the Grade XIII French Composition Results, Brousseau, D.; VI, 2, 1949-50 p. 17

Marking Upper School Spanish, Drummond, O. L.; VI, 2, 1949-50 p. 27

President's Address, Leduc, J.; V, 1, 1948, p. 5

Upper School French Authors, Stewart, Betty; VI, 2, 1949-50 p. 16

The Upper School French Examinations, Sniderman, M.; IX, 3, 1953, p. 3

EXPERIMENTS

An Experiment in Grade IX, Stewart, W. R.; I, 1, 1944, p. 48

Experiment in Teaching French in Alberta, Barclay, E. C.; I, 2, 1944 p. 47

Experimental Work in Alberta, Smith, Helen M.; I, 3, 1945, p. 17

A Reading-Conversation Experiment in Grades VIII and IX, Danforth, W. C.; II, 1, 1945 p. 34

FREE COMPOSITIONS

A Free Composition for Grade XII French, Klinck, G. A.; IV, 1, 1947, p. 47

A Good Composition Written by a Grade XIII Student; VII, 1, 1950 p. 35

Graded French Compositions, VI, 2, 1950 p. 33

Material For Free Composition in Spanish, Barr, John; IV, 1, 1947, p. 24

Writing Free Compositions, Dick, Helen; III, 1, 1946 p. 26

GRAMMAR—GENERAL

Co-operation in Grammar Teaching, Cartledge, H. A.; X, 1, 1953 p. 17

A Method for Correction of Sentences, Standing, Maude; V, 1, 1948 p. 28

Sentence Correction, Chowen, Elizabeth; I, 2, 1944 p. 28

Sentence Correction, Adams, Ada M.; VI, 1, 1949 p. 16

GRAMMAR—FRENCH

Les Adjectifs Possessifs, Andison, J. G.; III, 4, 1947 p. 13

Agreement of Past Participle, Grade X & XI; IX, 1, 1952 p. 25

Causative "Faire", Brown, Paul L.; I, 1, 1944 p. 17

Common Errors in Written French, Torrens, Robert W.; X, 4, 1954, p. 12

Comparative and Superlative in Grade IX, Powell, Olive; I, 1, 1944, p. 26

Correcting Errors, Conway, Elizabeth; VII, 1, 1950 p. 17

Cours Moyen I—Grade XII, Essentials, Smith, Janet H.; I, 2, 1944 p. 21

The Demonstrative Pronoun, Steinbauer, David; VII, 3, 1951 p. 24

Difficulties in Grade XIII French Grammar, Hall, Alfred; I, 2, 1944, p. 18

The First Fifteen Minutes, Clinton, Beck; V, 3, 1949, p. 51

Grade X Grammar Review, Hamlyn, Eloise; I, 3, 1945, p. 31

Grammar Difficulties—Cours Moyen I, Hall, Alfreda; I, 4, 1945, p. 14

Great Grandfather's French Book, Goldstick, Isidore; IV, 2, 1948, p. 9

A Handy Verb Chart; I, 1, 1944, p. 26
Hints, Galloway J. L.; I, 4, 1945, p. 27
Indirect Speech, Jenkin, H. E.;
 IV, 2, 1948, p. 17
Learning Exercises, Shell, Leila, N. M.;
 I, 2, 1944, p. 30
Make Reflexive Verbs Live, Wilkins,
 Dorothy; I, 1, 1944, p. 26
Notes on Teaching Verbs, Luke, E. F.;
 II, 4, 1946 p. 23
Paragraphs for Verb Practice, Powell,
 Olive; I, 2, 1944 p. 28
The Passive in French, Smith, Elizabeth;
 V, 1, 1948 p. 30
Position of Personal Pronouns, Bearder,
 Gwen; VIII, 3, 1952 p. 14
Pot-pourri, Schmidt, Conradine;
 VII, 1, 1950, p. 38
A Practical Verb Chart,
 Oster, Cecilia, M.; V, 2, 1948, p. 26
A Prose Lesson for Grade XII,
 Klinck, G. A., III, 3, 1947, p. 19
*Relative Position of Two or More Pro-
 noun Objects in French*, Howard,
 Desmond; VII, 1, 1950, p. 40
Remarques sur le passé en français,
 Andison, J. G., IV, 2, 1948, p. 12;
 IV, 3 and 4, 1948 p. 16
Review of Agreement of Past Participle,
 Legget, Florence; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 28
Review of Cours Moyen II—Grade XIII,
 Smith, Janet J.; I, 3, 1945, p. 32
A Review of French Adjectives,
 Smeaton, Winnifred; IX, 3, 1953, p. 21
A Review of French Pronouns,
 Chown, Elizabeth; IX, 3, 1953, p. 15
Review of the Subjunctive,
 Grant, M. Elizabeth; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 29
Revue du Subjonctif, Leduc, Jacques;
 I, 3, 1945, p. 20
A Sample Review Sheet for Grade XII
 (based on Lesson XV of Cours
 Moyen); VI, 1, 1949, p. 22
Students Handle Reflexive Verbs,
 Campbell, Natalie; V, 3, 1949, p. 32
Students Handle Reflective Verbs,
 Howard, Desmond; V, 3, 1949, p. 33
*Suggestions—French Verbs, Supplementary
 Reading, Cours Moyen, Vocabularys*,
 Steels, H. C.; VI, 2, 1949 p. 30
A Summary of Pronouns—Cours Moyen
 Pt. I, Adams, Ada N.; II, 1, 1945, p. 31
*Tableau Comparatif des Pronoms Inter-
 rogatifs et Relatifs*, James, Edith C.;
 VII, 2, 1950 p. 24
The Teaching of French Grammar,
 Morgan, J. R. H.; VI, 1, 1949 p. 13
*A Teaching Plan for Grade XI French
 Grammar, Cours Moyen Part I, Lesson
 XV*, Cowie, Helen; I, 2, 1944 p. 17
The Translation of "It",
 Steinbauer, David; VI, 1, 1949, p. 18

Use of French Subjunctive,
 Goldstick, I.; II, 3, 1946 p. 22
Use of Past Tense in French,
 Leathers, V.; II, 4, 1946 p. 13
*Useful Phrases for Grade XI—Cours
 Moyen, Part I*, 1-8, Edmondson, Gladys;
 IV, 1, 1947, p. 21; IV, 2, 1948, p. 27
The Versatile Window Blind,
 Stewart, Mary; II, 2, 1945 p. 26

GRAMMAR—GERMAN

German Participles, Chown, Elizabeth;
 IX, 2, 1953 p. 22
An Outline, Noble, Eunice; VIII, 3,
 1952 p. 15
Passive Voice, Steinhauer, David;
 IV, 2, 1948 p. 24
*Review of Grade XII—Lernen Sie
 Deutsch*; VIII, 2, 1951 p. 22
Teaching of Conditional Sentences,
 Steinhauer, David; IV, 1, 1947, p. 17
Teaching of Modal Auxiliaries,
 Steinhauer, David; V, 3, 1949, p. 36
Word Order, Schissler, Doris;
 VII, 2, 1950, p. 29

JOKES AND BONERS

Enfant Terrible; VI, 4, 1950, p. 17
Examination Highlights;
 III, 4, 1947 p. 25
Jokes and Boners; II, 4, 1946, p. 10;
 II, 2, 1945, p. 40; II, 2, 1945, p. 43
 II, 1, 1945, p. 56; I, 4, 1945, p. 40; I, 4,
 1945, p. 18; I, 4, 1945, p. 12; I, 3, 1945,
 p. 48; I, 2, 1944, p. 14; I, 1, 1944, in-
 side back cover; III, 3, 1947, p. 38
Ode To French Authors; VI, 1, 1949, p. 21
On fait ce qu'on peut!; VII, 2, 1951, p. 48
Original Interpretation; III, 4, 1947, p. 36
Pas Si Mauvaise, Cette Idée; VI, 4,
 1950 p. 40
Rions Un Peu!; III, 2, 1947, p. 27
Sabotage; I, 1, 1944 p. 20
Student Boners; III, 2, 1947, p. 21
 Halford, K., III, 4, 1947, p. 21; IV, 1,
 1947 p. 25
An Unexpected Answer,
 Howard, Desmond; IV, 1, 1947, p. 16
Waste of Time, III, 3, 1947, p. 34

LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES

*The Alberta Association of Teachers of
 French*, Smith, Helen M.; I, 1, 1944,
 p. 47
Arouse the Interest of Grade IX Pupils,
 Brodie, Lillian; II, 4, 1946, p. 22
Beginning French in September,
 McCormick, Eleanor; II, 4, 1946, p. 22

Beginning a New Subject.
 Liddy, Catherine; II, 4, 1946, p. 21

A Brief Survey of the Educational System in France and of Recent Plans for its Reform. Balthazar, Isabelle; V, 2, 1948, p. 7

The Cleveland Plan. de Sauzé, E. B.; I, 4, 1945 p. 5

A Commercial School Experiment. Hutton, Ernest A., V, 2, 1948, p. 20

Correspondence Courses in Alberta. Lavallée, M.; I, 4, 1945 p. 3

Do's and Don'ts for September. Scott, Ethel; II, 4, 1946, p. 20

L'Enseignement de l'anglais dans les collèges classiques de la province de Québec. Bernier, Adrien; X, 1, 1953, p. 11

L'Enseignement de l'anglais en France. Eyssautier, Gabriel (Wilson, M. M.); VI, 3, 1950 p. 30

L'Enseignement des Langues Modernes en Angleterre. Travis, J. E.; III, 1, 1946, p. 3; III, 29, 1947 p. 10

L'Enseignement secondaire en France. Mélèse, M. P.; VII, 4, 1951 p. 5

The Examination in Oral French in England. Laycock, Edith M.; VI, 2, 1949 p. 11

French in the Elementary School—Why Not? Hammond, Lottie; IX, 4, 1953, p. 5; X, 3, 1954, p. 15

French Literature Courses in the U.S.A.. White, Lucien; VIII, 4, 1952 p. 10

The German Option; VIII, 1, 1951 p. 18

German Studies in England To-day. Fairley, Barker; III, 3, 1947 p. 5

Grade XII "Authors" Elsewhere. Doole, Irene; VIII, 4, 1951 p. 13

Increase in Foreign Language Study. Language Fed. Bulletin, New York State; X, 2, 1953 p. 25

An Intensive Language Programme. Parker, J. H.; II, 1, 1946, p. 14

Just a Chat. Doole, Irene; VIII, 1, 1951 p. 22

Living the Language. Bélanger, G.; II, 1, 1945 p. 21

Making a Start in German. Barker, Leo; II, 4, 1946 p. 23

Modern Language Instruction in England. Wilkins, Dorothy M.; VI, 3, 1950 p. 19

New Brunswick Goes Eclectic. Tailion, Léopold; VI, 4, 1950, p. 13

News From Manitoba. Patrick, A. W.; I, 1, 1944 p. 39

Notes on the Lower School Course. Mackintosh, Agnes W.; II, 1, 1945, p. 19

A One-Language Basis. Maronpot, Raymond P.; X, 1, 1953, p. 18

Over-Simplification. Goggio, E.; X, 2, 1953 p. 10

Second Language Teaching in Europe (from C. E. A. Newsletter); VII, 3, 1951 p. 48

Suggested Course of Study in German, Grades X to XII. Stewart, D. E.; VII, 2, 1951 p. 26

Teaching English in France. Roy, George R.; IX, 4, 1953, p. 9

The Teaching of French in the High Schools of the Province of Quebec. Divine, F. J.; IX, 3, 1953 p. 7

The Thirteenth Anniversary of the Cleveland Plan. McClain, William H.; V, 2, 1948 p. 3

The Written Examination in England. Laycock, Edith M.; IV, 4, 1950, p. 23

A Year on Exchange. Wilkins, Dorothy; V, 2, 1948 p. 16

LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

GENERAL

Anastasia's Song For Harvest. Tr. Livesay, Florence Randal; III, 1, 1946 p. 20

Foreign Languages for Peace. Freeman, S. A.; II, 4, 1946 p. 3

Tune "God Save the King" and Louis XIV's Ulcers. Greig, J. T.; II, 4, 1946 p. 6

United Front. Goggio, E.; X, 2, 1954, p. 5

University College (poetry). Bealey, Betty; X, 3, 1954 p. 3

Victoria's New Union. Toye, William E.; IX, 3, 1953 p. 12

FRENCH

Analysis of La Fontaine's "Le Trésor et les Deux Hommes". Conacher, Wm.; I, 2, 1944 p. 9

Aperçu sur la Littérature d'après Guerre. Bourbousson, Edouard; V, 3, 1949, p. 5

Architecture Canadienne-Française. Hébert, Maurice; I, 1, 1944 p. 8

Canevas d'une conférence sur le roman contemporain et les acquisitions de la psychologie. Bray, René; VII, 1, 1950 p. 18

La Capricieuse. Marion, Séraphin; I, 1, 1944 p. 3

Concerning the Influence of Voltaire in French Canada. Jobin, Antoine J.; X, 4, 1954 p. 6

"Décembre" (poésie). Bronner, F.; VII, 1, 1950 p. 1

Fin des Songes. Elie, Robert (report by Tassie, J. S.); IX, 2, 1953 p. 9

La Fontaine, Fabulist of France. Triebel, L. A.; VII, 1, 1950, p. 14

French-Canadian Novel Comes of Age. Jeanneret, F. C. A.; III, 2, 1947, p. 7

French-Canadian Outlook, Saunders,
R. M.; II, 2, 1946, p. 5; II, 3, 1946, p. 7

La Goule (poésie) Bronner, Frédéric;
VII, 2, 1951 p. 14

Laval University Forges Ahead,
Klinck, G. A.; VI, 3, 1950 p. 22

Une Lettre de Fridolin; VII, 4, 1951, p. 10

Maria Chapdelaine, Hicks, R. K.;
V, 1, 1948, p. 18

"**Les Plouffe**", Joliat, Eugène; V, 3,
1949 p. 9

Originality of Canadian Literature,
Greenwood, Thos.; X, 3, 1954, p. 13

**Rabelais and the Voyages of Jacques
Cartier**, Lacey, A.; I, 3, 1945, p. 5

Remarques sur la poésie française,
Bronner, Frédéric; X, 1, 1953 p. 7

**Résistance des Ecrivains français sous
l'Occupation**, Balthazard, I.; II, 2, 1945,
p. 12; II, 3, 1946 p. 17

Romain Rolland, Torrens, Robert W.;
III, 4, 1947 p. 8

Roman Français de 1912 à 1940,
Houpert, Jean, IX, 1, 1952 p. 8

**Salut Canadien aux Poètes de la France
Libérée** (poésie), Hébert, Maurice,
III, 4, 1947 p. 16

**Song (from the French of Marie
LeBlanc)**, Livesay, Florence Randal;
III, 3, 1947 p. 4

Survival of French, McAndrew, Allan;
III, 1, 1946, p. 10

Un Théâtre Vraiment Canadien,
Klinck, G. A.; VII, 2, 1951 p. 5

Toits de Paris, Bernard, Jean-Jacques;
III, 4, 1947 p. 17

Traditions of the Midi, Stewart, Bessie;
VIII, 2, 1952 p. 9

Victor Hugo et la Musique,
Mouton, Jean, VI, 1, 1949 p. 3

La Vie Théâtrale en France, Mélèse,
Pierre; VIII, 2, 1952 p. 5

Vieux Québec, Marquis, G. E.; VI, 4,
1950, p. 1

Voltaire, Triebel, L. A.; VII, 2, 1951
..... p. 9

GERMAN

Canada Through German Eyes, Field,
Eleanor M.; VII, 3, 1951 p. 13

In Flanders (poem), Boeschenstein, H.;
X, 1, 1953 p. 1

Modern German Theatre, Marigold, W.
G.; VIII, 3, 1952 p. 7

The Universal Goethe, Fairley, Barker;
VI, 3, 1950 p. 3

Das Volkslied im 20. Jahrhundert,
Arnold, R. K.; II, 1, 1945 p. 9

Vorher Weimar, Nachher—Was?,
Coper, R.; II, 4, 1946 p. 7

ITALIAN

**Italian Influence on the Cultural Life
of Old Montreal**, Goggio, Emilio; IX, 1,
1952 p. 5

Italy's Gift to Civilization, Goggio,
Emilio; IV, 1, 1947 p. 5

**Original Poem of Italian Inspiration in
Early Canadian Literature**, Goggio, E.;
II, 1, 1945 p. 5

PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH

**Claims of Spanish in our Secondary
Schools**, Cano, J.; I, 2, 1944 p. 5

A Cuban Poet in Niagara Falls,
Irving, T. B.; IX, 4, 1953 p. 12

Los ensayos críticos de larra, Marin,
Diego; VII, 2, 1951, Np. 17

Miguel de Cervantes, 1547-1616,

Parker, J. H.; IV, 1, 1947, p. 10

**Some Aspects of the Portuguese Con-
tribution**, Parker, J. H.; V, 1, 1948,
..... p. 11

O. M. L. T. A. NEWS

O. A. Conventions, I, 4, 1945, p. 37;
II, 3, 1946, p. 43; II, 4, 1946, p. 36;
III, 3, 1947, p. 43; III, 4, 1947, p. 26;
IV, 2, 1948, p. 48; IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p.
51; V, 3, 1949, p. 5; VI, 3, 1950, p.
24; VIII, 3, 1951, p. 1; X, 2, 1953, p.
45.

Executive Meetings, I, 2, 1944, p. 46;
II, 2, 1945, p. 41; III, 1, 1946, p. 41;
III, 2, 1947, p. 46; II, 4, 1947, p. 28
IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 51; VII, 2, 1950,
p. 37.

Presidential Addresses,

Freeman, H. A.; I, 3, 1945 p. 3

Wilkins, D. M.; II, 3, 1946 p. 3

The U. S. Examinations, Leduc, J.;
V, 1, 1948 p. 5

Teaching the Living Language,
Klinck, G. A.; V, 4, 1949 p. 3

ORAL WORK AND PRONUNCIATION

**Au But de Conduire la Leçon en
Français**, DeMuy, Eva Bouchard;
III, 1, 1946 p. 16

Classroom Expressions, Gray Wm.;
VIII, 1, 1951 p. 24

Conservation Stimuli, Boucher, R.;
II, 1, 1945, p. 37

Easing the Oral Burden, Boyles, Sadie
M.; II, 1, 1945, p. 38

The Eye Will Assist the Ear, Evans,
Muriel E.; I, 4, 1945 p. 30

The First Fifteen Minutes, Beck, C.;
VI, 1, 1949 p. 21

French in the Classroom, Dickson, Ada
D.; V, 3, 1949 p. 31

French Intonation, Greig, J. T.;
II, 2, 1945 p. 46

French or Patois, Bronner, F.:
 VI, 2, 1950 p. 13
The Grade IX Pupil Speaks French,
 Beggs, M.; II, 1, 1945, p. 35
The Grade XI Conversation Class,
 Goble, Dora L.; VII, 1, 1950, p. 36
Group Conversations, Bergoin, Daisy;
 II, 1, 1945 p. 36
A High School Student Speaks His Mind,
 II, 4, 1946, page 24
Hints on Oral Work, Sister Mary
 Andrew; V, 3, 1949 p. 26
Liaison or Linking; VI, 1, 1949 p. 24
Liaisons, Joliat, Eugène; VIII, 2,
 1952 p. 17
 Mute "E", Joliat, Eugène; IX, 4,
 1953 p. 14
Notes on Pronunciation, Klinck, G. A.;
 X, 2, 1954 p. 11
Oral Aspects of Modern Language Instruction, Klinck, G. A.; III, 2,
 1947 p. 3
Oral Drill in Grade IX, Robinson, Edna;
 I, 3, 1945 p. 31
Oral French, Lake, Madeline; V, 1949
 p. 20
Oral Work and Pronunciation,
 Dubet, J. C.; II, 1, 1945 p. 33
Oral Work Can Be Fun, Mackenzie,
 Margaret; I, 2, 1944 p. 25
Phonetic List for Fall, Elliott,
 Dorothy; III, 1, 1946 p. 24
A Practical Phonetics Laboratory,
 Hayne, D. M.; IV, 2, 1948 p. 26
Prononciation de certains mots tirés de cours Moyen de Français, II, Rièse,
 Laure VIII, 2, 1952 p. 19
Quebec French, Smyth, Dora H.;
 III, 1, 1946 p. 19
Some Methods of Teaching French Pronunciation, Doherty, J. C.; II, 1,
 1945 p. 18
The Spoken Language, Lewis, C.;
 X, 1, 1953 p. 5
Syllabification, II, 3, 1946 p. 46

PEN PALS

Colis à Nos Correspondants Français,
 Elliott, Norah; V, 1, 1948 p. 25
Correspondence with French-Speaking Pupils, I, 2, 1944 p. 47
Correspondence with German Students:
 IV, 1, 1947, p. 30; V, 2, 1949, p. 25
Ein Brief aus Deutschland; IV, 3 & 4,
 1948 p. 27
English Letter From France; III, 4,
 1947 p. 23
Extraits de Lettres de Nos Amis de France et des îles de Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, Elliott, Norah; III, 4, 1947, p. 22

French Correspondents Again Available:
 II, 3, 1946 p. 50
Letters from France; II, 4, 1946, p. 39
Letters from France, Fairley, Hazel;
 III, 4, 1947 p. 21
Pen Pals for Canadian Pupils;
 II, 4, 1946, p. 37
Pen Pals in Germany; VII, 1, 1950, p. 13
UNA Overseas Correspondence Department; V, 1, 1948 p. 25

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES

Question Box; I, 1, 1944, p. 28; I, 4,
 1945, p. 30 & 31; II, 1, 1946, p. 40;
 II, 2, 1945, p. 39; II, 3, 1946, p. 47;
 V, 1, 1948, p. 38; VII, 4, 1951, p. 17

PUPIL PARTICIPATION

Keep the Kettle Boiling, Klinck, G. A.;
 X, 2, 1954, p. 6
Means of Gaining Student Participation in French Classes, Edmondson, Gladys;
 V, 3, 1949, p. 22
Mouse Traps and Rat Traps,
 Depew, Mary E.; V, 2, 1949, p. 24
Participation Maintains Interest,
 Townsend, E. H. S.; V, 3, 1949, p. 19
Partners, Edmondson, Gladys; I, 2,
 1944 p. 23
Projects in Grade X, Stewart, Mary R.;
 V, 1, 1948 p. 32
Pupil Participation, Klinck, G. A.; V, 3,
 1949 p. 13
Pupils Make Up Dialogue, Wilson, K. E.;
 I, 2, 1944 p. 25
Pupils Make Up Questions, Barnaby, J.;
 I, 2, 1944, p. 27
Reading Assignments Handled by Pupils,
 Bell, Marion; I, 2, 1944 p. 23
Study Habits, Moulton, W. G. (adapted
 M. Sniderman); X, 3, 1954 p. 18
Teach Pupils How to Study, Fraser, G.
 E.; I, 4, 1945 p. 17
Team Work, Tyson, C.; I, 2, 1944, p. 28

READING, SUPPLEMENTARY OR EXTENSIVE

GENERAL—

Hints, Taylor, May; I, 1, 1944, p. 15
Rewards, Hammond, Lottie; I, 2, 1944,
 p. 22
Suggestions, Steels, H. C.; VI, 2, 1949,
 p. 30
Supplementary Reading,
 Anderson, Blanche; V, 3, 1949, p. 29
Supplementary Reading, Sniderman, M.,
 X, 4, 1954 p. 14

READING LISTS, RECOMMENDED

French; I, 1, 1944, p. 42; I, 3, 1945, p. 47; I, 4, 1945, p. 34; II, 4, 1946, p. 34; III, 1, 1946, p. 45; V, 3, 1949, p. 42; IX, 3, 1953, p. 14.

German; I, 1, 1944, p. 41; III, 1, 1946, p. 46; VI, 1, 1949, p. 25.

Spanish; II, 4, 1946, p. 32; III, 1, 1946, p. 45; VI, 3, 1950, p. 32.

REVIEW SENTENCES

FRENCH

Devoir, Pouvoir, Savoir; VI, 1, 1949 p. 24

Interrogative Pronouns and Adjectives; VII, 3, 1951 p. 22

Savoir, Pouvoir, Connaitre; VII, 3, 1951 p. 16

Subjunctive; VI, 1, 1949, p. 40

Grade XIII; I, 3, 1945, p. 26; II, 3, 1946, p. 24; III, 3, 1947, p. 22; IV, 2, 1948, p. 29; IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 28; V, 1, 1948, p. 21; V, 2, 1948, p. 29; VI, 4, 1950, p. 27; VIII, 3, 1951, p. 22; IX, 3, 1953, p. 18; IX, 3, 1953, p. 35

Grade XII; IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 28; V, 2, 1948, p. 26; VII, 2, 1950, p. 33; VII, 2, 1950, p. 35; VIII, 3, 1951, p. 19; IX, 3, 1953, p. 34; X, 2, 1953, p. 26; X, 3, 1954, p. 37.

Grade XI; IV, 1, 1947, p. 23; IV, 2, 1948, p. 28; VII, 2, 1950, p. 33; VII, 2, 1950, p. 35; VIII, 2, 1952, p. 38; IX, 3, 1953, p. 30; X, 2, 1953, p. 26; X, 3, 1954, p. 37.

GERMAN

Schreiben Sie Deutsch; VII, 2, 1950, p. 30

SIGHT PASSAGES

FRENCH

Grade XIII; II, 3, 1946, p. 27; III, 1, 1946, p. 23; III, 2, 1947, p. 48; IV, 2, 1948, p. 30; VI, 2, 1949, p. 34; VIII, 4, 1952, p. 18.

Grade XII; II, 3, 1946, p. 27; III, 1, 1946, p. 21; III, 2, 1947, p. 48; IV, 2, 1948, p. 32; VIII, 4, 1952, p. 18.

Grade XI; II, 3, 1946, p. 27; III, 1, 1946, p. 21; IV, 2, 1948, p. 32; V, 1, 1948, p. 29; VIII, 4, 1952, p. 18.

Grade X; II, 3, 1946, p. 27; IV, 2, 1948, p. 33; V, 1, 1948, p. 33; V, 2, 1948, p. 23; VIII, 4, 1952, p. 18.

Grade IX; IV, 2, 1948, p. 33.

SUMMER NUMBER, 1954

GERMAN

Grade XIII; II, 3, 1946, p. 30; IV, 2, 1948, p. 34; IX, 1, 1952, p. 22.

Grade XII; II, 3, 1946, p. 30.

Grade XI; II, 3, 1946, p. 30.

SPANISH

Grade XIII; IV, 2, 1948 p. 35

Grade XII; IV, 2, 1948 p. 36

SUMMER SCHOOLS

FRENCH

L'Ecole Française de Banff, Houis, Y.; IV, 3 and 4, 1948, p. 25

Graduate Summer Courses in English and French; X, 2, 1954, p. 39

Ontario Department of Education Travelling Course in Oral French in the Province of Quebec; III, 4, 1947, p. 29

A Participation Scholarship (Elan); VII, 3, 1951 p. 17

A Travelling French Course, Beattie, Wm.; IV, 1, 1947, p. 27

A Travelling French Course; IV, 3 & 4, 1948 p. 9

GERMAN

Die Deutsch Ferienschule, Kalbfleisch, H.; V, 1, 1948, p. 37

It's Fun to Speak German, Lake, M.; V, 1, 1948, p. 36

A Refresher Course in German; IV, 3 & 4, 1948, p. 50

Waterloo Refresher Course in German; X, 1, 1954, p. 6

SPANISH

A Summer Course in Spanish; IV, 3 & 4, 1948 p. 43

TRAVEL

The French Course of Grenoble High School, Fugler, Marjorie; VIII, 1, 1951, p. 19

Historic Brittany, Triebel, L. A.; VI, 1, 1949 p. 9

Impressions of a Year in France, Liddy, C.; VI, 2, 1949 p. 20

Mexican Journey, Lake, Madeline H.; VIII, 3, 1952 p. 11

A Motor Trip Through France, Lake, M. H.; VII, 3, 1951 p. 5

My Visit to Quebec, Robinson, Wey;
 I, 1, 1944 p. 13
Summer in Quebec, Fugler, Marjorie;
 V, 1, 1948, p. 35
Pension Française, Watts, Eileen M.;
 IX, 3, 1953 p. 46
Visites Interprovinciales, Biggar, F. H.;
 III, 4, 1947, p. 24.
 V, 2, 1949, p. 48; VI, 3, 1950, p. 26;
 VII, 3, 1951, p. 18; IX, 3, 1953, p. 43;
 X, 2, 1954, p. 25.
A Year on Exchange, Wilkins, Dorothy
 M; V, 2, 1949, p. 16
A Year's Teaching in Nazi Germany,
 Kieser, W. E.; VII, 1, 1950 p. 5

VOCABULARY

GENERAL

Idiomdex, Wagner, R. F.; IX, 1, 1952,
 p. 21
New Words, Fox, Eleanor; I, 1, 1944,
 p. 22
On Teaching Vocabulary, Leathers, V.:
 IV, 1, 1947, p. 13
Vocabulary Game, Halford, Kay; I, 1,
 1944 p. 23

FRENCH

Blackboard Work, Fox, Eleanor; I, 1,
 1944 p. 25
Dramatizing Vocabulary, Goldstick, I.;
 I, 2, 1944 p. 27
A Few Remarks on Semantics,
 Humphrey, H. L.; VI, 4, 1950 p. 5
Folding Vocabulary, Smith, Janet;
 I, 1, 1944 p. 23
French-English Similarities and Dif-
ferences, Greig, Janet; II, 4, 1946, p. 18
A Grade XIII Project, Brûlé, O. J.
A Grade XIII Vocabulary Review,
 Andison, J. G.; I, 3, 1945 p. 28

CONTENTS OF INDEX

AIMS and OBJECTS	21
AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS and REALIA	
General 21, French 22, German 22	
Spanish 22	
AUTHORS GENERAL—French	22
AUTHORS—German, Spanish	23
BOOK REVIEWS—Miscellaneous	23
French 23, German 28	
Italian 28, Spanish 28	
CLUBS	29
COMMITTEE REPORTS	29
DICTION TESTS	29
EXAMINATIONS	29
EXPERIMENTS	30
FREE COMPOSITIONS	30
GRAMMAR—General	30
French 30, German 31	
JOKES and BONERS	31
LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES	31

Grouping Words For Review,
 Wilson, Pearl; I, 3, 1945, p. 33
Make Numbers Live, Brokenshire, M. C.;
 I, 2, 1944 p. 27
An Oral Review of Vocabulary for
Grade X, Williamson, W.; II, 1, 1945,
 p. 37
An Oral Vocabulary for Grade IX,
 Evans, M.; II, 1, 1945 p. 35
An Organized Vocabulary Review,
 Garland, Julie; I, 3, 1945 p. 34
Projects in Grade X, Stewart, Mary R.;
 V, 1, 1948 p. 32
Putting Vocabulary to Use,
 Wilkins, Dorothy; I, 2, 1944 p. 26
A Sense of Achievement,
 Armstrong, Florence; I, 2, 1944, p. 26
Set New Words to Work,
 Galloway, J. Louise; I, 1, 1944, p. 22
Simple Games; II, 2, 1945, p. 30
A Stimulating Exercise,
 Macpherson, Mary, K.; I, 1, 1944, p. 25
Suggestions, Steels, H. C.;
 VI, 2, 1950 p. 30
Teaching by Phrases, Chambers, E. C.;
 I, 4, 1945 p. 27
Variety, Saunders, Jessie; I, 4, 1945, p. 27
Vocabulary Building, Ferguson, I.;
 I, 4, 1945 p. 17
Vocabulary Building, Hutchison, M.;
 I, 1, 1944 p. 23
Vocabulary Testing For Review,
 McCraig, Muriel; I, 3, 1945 p. 33
Words Borrowed From French;
 I, 4, 1945, p. 28
Working Partners, Armstrong, Florence;
 I, 1, 1944 p. 25
A Xmas Vocabulary; II, 2, 1945 p. 27

GERMAN

A Basic German Vocabulary for Use With
 "Lernen Sie Deutsch", Howe, T. R.;
 I, 4, 1945, p. 19; II, 1, 1945, p. 27

LITERATURE and THE ARTS	
General 32, French	32
German 33, Italian	33
Portuguese and Spanish	33
O.M.L.T.A. NEWS	33
ORAL WORK and PRONUNCIATION	33
PEN PALS	34
PROBLEMS and DIFFICULTIES	34
PUPIL PARTICIPATION	34
READING, Supplementary or Extensive	
General 34, Reading List	35
REVIEW SENTENCES	
French 35, German	35
SIGHT PASSAGES—French	35
German 35, Spanish	35
SUMMER SCHOOLS—French	35
German 35, Spanish	35
TRAVEL	35
VOCABULARY—General	36
French 36, German	36

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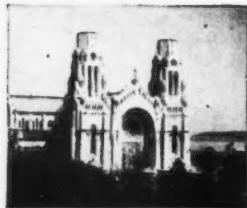
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